

"Allow Yourself to be Forgiven"

The phrase that gives the title to this column is Father Karl Rahner's, and is taken from an essay on the Sacrament of Penance. It has been a most thought-provoking phrase for me, for it serves as an invitation. It calls each of us, and the community of God's People as a whole, to a position of openness and acceptance before the Father, to receive from Him His generous and unmerited gifts of mercy and reconciliation.



To be worthy recipients, we must be authentically honest with ourselves, recognizing our radical dependence on God and, in that recognition, allowing God to create us anew. We empty ourselves of our former foolishness and let ourselves be overcome by the life of Christ.

The revision of the Rite of Penance provides us with an opportunity for reflection on this mighty gift of God's forgiveness in our lives.

The gift was first given to us in our Baptism when we were incorporated into the dying and rising of Christ. The power of the resurrection life made us God's own sons and daughters, no

longer slaves of sin but alive in the friendship of Christ and the Christian community. Our relationship is a personal one of intimate union with the Father. Being co-heirs with Christ, however, brought with it the responsibility of living a life for God, of striving "to be holy as the Father is holy" (Luke 6:36), of constantly struggling to live in conformity with the Gospel.

To support us in that struggle, we have the further gift of the Eucharist. The reading of the Word of God provides us with guidance and encouragement along the way; here God speaks a word of challenge, a word of mercy. But especially in the gathering of God's People for the great Eucharistic Prayer, the reconciling death and resurrection of Christ is made present once again. By our sharing in the Body and Blood of Christ, we are "brought together in unity by the power of the Holy Spirit." Our sharing at the table of the Lord makes the gift of God's forgiveness ever new and strengthens the bonds of friendship and peace within the Christian community.

We realize, however, that there are times when we partake of the Body and Blood of Christ unworthily. We have brought discord and unrest to the Christian community, we have joined together in works of injustice within the human family, we have weakened or ruptured our relationship with the caring Father. The effect of our actions is to become tight-fisted,

closed and defensive, rejecting the invitation to allow ourselves to be forgiven.

Joyfully, God does not wait for us to act first. Pained by our lack of faithfulness, he stirs up the power of His Holy Spirit in our midst to call us back home to Himself, to show us the depth and dimensions of His mercy. In that power, we realize in tears our brokenness, but in hope, move to return home.

So rich, then, are the gifts of God's mercy and forgiveness that a third sacrament serves as their channel — Penance. Seen by the new Rite as an act of worship of the Father for His loving mercy, nevertheless, this sacrament is also an aid and support in renewing and preserving the integrity of our baptismal commitment. Through it we open our fists and knock down the barriers that keep us apart. We allow the life of Christ to flow freely through us once again. How could it ever become mechanical or routine or dry?

Like all liturgy, the celebration of the Sacrament of Penance should be a summit experience, an act of praise and thanks for the great gift of God's mercy, the climax to a thoroughgoing reform and renewal of our lives. But it is also the source of a hopeful future — continuing the process of renewal, forgetting the past, basking in the love of the Lord. With confidence, then, let us allow ourselves to be forgiven.

The Role of Hope in the Modern World

The following is the text of Paul VI's address during the General Audience of Wednesday, Feb. 25.

Hope, yes, hope. What word is this? A word that we listen to willingly, in the midst, as we are, of so many uncertainties and so many tribulations. We listen to it willingly, as a response to these expectations that modern life evokes from us in a more consistent and urgent way; as a promise that transfers into the future the object of our desire, to which the present does not give corresponding satisfaction; as a credit that promises to obtain assuredly something which present disappointment over a failure to attain it makes us desire even more.



The experience of life merely increases our desires; the more we have, the more we would like to have; and, if this aspiration is not an inevitable deception, we live on hope. We cannot, we must not say, enough! We must aim at an increase, at a step forward, at something more, which gives us no peace, at least not until we are sure today that we will achieve it tomorrow.

This is hope.

And today we are stimulated by a double motive to this projection into the future of the pursuit of what we lack: the exterior conditions of insufficiency, precariousness, and disorder, and therefore by a need to change our lives, of renewal and justice, by which the dynamism of modern life is nourished.

We can draw from these complex and tormented conditions the tension, that is, the natural hope, characteristic of our time.

The other motive, which is often interwoven with the first one, is interior. It arises from human suffering, innate in the nature of man, who is never really content until he has attained that good, that fullness, that happiness, to which man is essentially ordained; just as the eye is never satisfied until it encounters light. And therefore hope is addressed to a transcendent aim, to the Infinite, to God. Once more the famous saying of St. Augustine is seen to be true, to be unique: "You, (oh Lord), have made us for yourself; and our heart is restless until it rests in You." To this fundamental aspiration of our life there responds the supreme attempt of natural hope, which generally remains in the dramatic and stupendous, but incomplete, state of desire, invocation, dream; and in its incompleteness it easily fails and is extinguished in scepticism and often in despair. But there is another answer to that aspiration, and it is given by the hope that does not delude, Christian hope, the hope based on faith.

Now we must speak of this religious hope, which invests also natural life from so many points of view, if we wish to obtain from the Holy Year, which we have just celebrated, the renewal that must be characteristic of it; we have called it: the civilization of love. It, too, has its roots in Christian hope. It is really not possible to love with a love that generates a true future, without hope, without true hope, which is hope invited to overcome the limits and obstacles characteristic of temporal horizons.

One of the great temptations, and also the most serious ill of our age, is the one which attacks the hope that Christ brought to the world: "take courage, He said, I have overcome the world." Deep in our hearts there is often concealed lack of confidence in the capacity of Christianity to really renew the life of men, modern men especially, imbued with so many other precarious and often false hopes, as

materialistic ones are, but which have a great appeal. With what effectiveness can our Christian profession cope with and solve today's problems, on scales made gigantic by technical and social progress? And some people fall back, with ill-concealed resignation, on the uncertainty of a Christianity lived without interior firmness, without moral strictness, without an impact on public life. And perhaps, not evaluating the error of the overall calculation about the fortune of life, they do not take into consideration the weight, even on the temporal plane, of eschatological hope, that is, the hope of eternal life.

No, this is not the way. We must live our Christian hope in courageous and serene fullness. Not just out of a traditional habit, which the stones in our graveyards often remember and bear witness to; not just because our historical background, which has penetrated so deeply into our spirituality, demands it; not out of indolent quietism, which thinks of a tolerable and fortunate result from the intrinsic play of natural causalities. But for other reasons!

We will just mention them. Hope must be based, above all, on the solidity of our ideas, our philosophy, our conception of history and life. In other words it must be based on the truth of our faith.

The one who believes will also hope. And then we know that the optimism of our hope can be based also on events which are apparently contrary to it, on the human plane, because "everything helps to secure the good of those who love God, those whom he has called in fulfillment of his design." And finally because a watchful and fatherly guide, Providence, guides our personal vicissitudes and the whole of history.

So Sons and Brothers, we must have hope and courage. With our Apostolic Blessing.

Jewish Group Defends Title 1 Services as 'Just'

Special to Courier-Journal

The practice of assigning city school teachers to provide remedial reading and mathematics services in non-public schools was defended as "constitutional and just" by Dr. Bernard Fryshman, chairman of the Commission on Legislation and Civic Action of Agudath Israel of America.

The statement of Agudath Israel, a major Orthodox Jewish advocate of government aid to non-public school children, was in reaction to the announced suit in Manhattan Federal Court by the National Coalition for Public Education and Religious Liberty (PEARL).

Dr. Fryshman stated that the PEARL suit is "a deplorable attempt

to deprive poor children of corrective and remedial services so that they should not go through life handicapped." The Agudath Israel spokesman declared that these services "do not violate the May 1975 ruling of the U.S. Supreme Court, because the public school teachers who are assigned to the non-public schools under Title I of the Federal Elementary and

Secondary Education Act merely provide therapeutic aid to disadvantaged children of a nature not provided by the non-public schools as part of their general academic curriculum."

Dr. Fryshman stated that "these remedial services should be continued on the non-public school sites in order to avoid dislocating a

child from his normal educational milieu." The Agudath Israel spokesman charged that if PEARL were to win this suit would "create an unconscionable harm to the handicapped non-public school

children who would be 'different' from their peers because they are compelled to spend part of their time in a different school."